

## ELECTRICAL CONNECTOR HAVING GUIDE AND CENTERING AID

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to an electrical connector composed of a plug connector and a mating connector, as well as guide and centering elements which cooperate with recesses.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

10 Guideways and centering aids in the form of additional elements for electrical connectors, particularly for facilitating the manufacture of an electrical plug-in connection, are available.

15 Such guide elements are configured in such a way that, on the long sides and/or transverse sides of a plug connector, guide elements are provided which are rectangular in cross-section and which engage with recesses, provided in the mating connector, during the entire insertion process of the plug connector into the mating connector. These recesses are produced by so-called shaping bevels during plastics  
20 injection-molding processes. However, this necessitates that these recesses become ever narrower in the direction of the base of the mating connector, i.e., as the insertion operation advances, so that the plug connector itself is first centered shortly before the insertion operation is completed. This  
25 means that the conventional guide elements also have a centering function.

30 However, it is disadvantageous that the plug connector, which is inserted in the mating connector, is only centered in the base of the mating connector, since vibrational forces generally affect the entire connector. Thus, on the basis of the lever length between the starting point of the cable

leading to the plug connector and the centering, a moment develops which can lead to the disengagement of the plug connector from the mating connector.

5 If the guide element is designed in such a way that the plug connector is guided in the mating connector over the entire insertion process, and in addition, centering elements are provided, then the position of the plug connector is statically over-defined. The result is that an exact,  
10 positionally-suitable disposition of the plug connector is not possible in this manner.

#### SUMMARY

An object of the present invention is to improve the cooperation of guide elements and centering elements of a plug connector with recesses which are provided in the mating connector.

To achieve this object, at least one recess is disposed on the mating connector and is dimensioned in such a way that, during the insertion of the plug connector into the mating connector, the guide element is guided in the recess and, in the inserted state, the recess is set apart from the guide element.

25 The design principle of the present invention is based on the fact that the plug connector is guided in a statically defined manner during the insertion process. After ending the insertion process, while the plug connector is resting on the connector base, centering elements retain the plug connector  
30 in the correct position in the mating connector, and at the same time, the guide elements provide no further function.

The guide elements may be composed of cam-like elements on the plug connector and guideway-like recesses on a mating  
35 connector. To ensure the functioning of such guideways according to the present invention, the cam-like formations are located in the immediate vicinity of the opening of the

plug connector, so that when mounting the plug connector on the mating connector, the cam-like formations are placed in position in the guide-like recesses in the mating connector and glide in these guide elements. The electrical contacts in the plug connector and mating connector, respectively, can be exactly connected with one another without the plug connector tilting during the insertion process and thus possibly destroying one or more electrical contacts.

When the electrical contact between the plug connector and the mating connector is produced, then the plug connector is in an end position. In this end position, the recess of the guide element is dimensioned in such a way that the cam-like formation of the guide element is no longer guided by the recess. In this position, centering elements engage and retain the connector in the correct position in the mating connector. To this end, according to the present invention, centering elements are arranged particularly on the opposite side pointing away from the opening of the plug connector, i.e., in the inserted state, the centering elements are in the area of the opening of the mating connector. The centering elements may have a lug-like formation and position the plug connector by punctiform support locations in the mating connector.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows a side view of the electrical connector according to the present invention immediately prior to the insertion process.

Figure 2 shows a plan view of the connector according to Figure 1 in the inserted state.

Figure 3 shows a section through a guide element according to Figure 1 along a line III-III.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Connector 1 shown in Figure 1 is made of a plug connector 2

and a mating connector 3. Plug connector 2 includes a housing 4 and a receptacle 5, for attaching a multicore electrical cable.

5 In the exemplary embodiment shown in Figure 1, plug connector 2 has a plurality of plug-in contacts 6 which engage with further mating plug-in contacts 7 in mating connector 3.

10 After positioning plug connector 2 over mating connector 3 to produce an electrical plug-in connection, a cam-like guide element 8 arranged on housing 4 reaches into a recess 9 provided on mating connector 3. While producing the plug-in connection, in which plug connector 2 is guided into mating connector 3 in the direction of an arrow 10, cam-like guide element 8 glides along recess 9 until plug-in contacts 6 are brought into engagement with mating plug-in contacts 7. The guidance of cam-like guide element 8 in recess 9 is subsequently released, in that the cross-section of recess 9, particularly in a region 11 which is also shown in the cross-section in Figure 3, is larger than the cross-section of guide element 8, so that cam-like guide element 8 is no longer immediately encircled by the walls of recess 9. When this position of plug connector 2 in mating connector 3 is reached, then in this exemplary embodiment, centering elements 12 shown in Figure 2 position plug connector 2 in mating connector 3. In the exemplary embodiment, centering elements 12 are formed as a circumferential shoulder which is far distant from the base of mating connector 3 to thus prevent the development of any pitching moments of plug connector 2 in mating connector 3.

30 Due to the very simple design of guide elements 8 and centering elements 12 according to the present invention, plug connector 2 is introduced into mating connector 3 in a statically defined manner and without tilting and damage to plug-in contacts 6 and mating plug-in contacts 7, respectively, and is also positioned correctly after producing

